

How Stress Can Wreak Havoc on Your Hair and Skin

That anxious feeling is doing some serious damage to your beauty.

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Stress isn't just an annoying byproduct of everyday life: It's also a major health and beauty saboteur. A lack of sleep, dehydration, and junk food cravings often go hand-in-hand with stress, which trickles down to poor hair and skin health. You'd be surprised to know that stress could actually be the root of these six beauty issues.

It weakens overall skin and hair health. Stress can interrupt sleep patterns—a key component for skin and body repair. Coupled with stress,

skimping on sleep weakens the immune system and puts the body's chemicals out of whack, often leaving you with lackluster skin and dull eyes, says Kathy Heshelow, founder of Sublime Beauty.

It promotes skin irritants. Stress also causes you to release certain hormones, which can trigger your body into channeling blood away from the skin toward muscles and other organs, says dermatologist David Bank, M.D., author of *Beautiful Skin: Every Woman's Guide to Looking Her Best at Any Age*. In particular, chronic stress deprives your skin of oxygen and essential nutrients—and without adequate amounts of them, you get skin conditions like acne.

It dries out everything. The negative effects of stress can present themselves on the skin with extreme dehydration that results in inflammation, hyperpigmentation, dullness and acne, says celebrity dermatologist Howard Murad, M.D. When you're stressed, the dead cell layer on the surface of the skin becomes thin and develops microscopic holes, which aren't able to provide a sufficient defense against aging ultraviolet rays, says Murad. Not only can stress cause breakouts, but it also creates tiny perforations in cell membranes that allow water to leak from cells and dehydrate the skin. That's when fine lines and a lackluster skin tone begin to appear.

It gives you wrinkles. Stress hormones increase blood pressure, raise pulse rates and constrict blood vessels, which in turn redirect blood away from the skin towards other organs, says Bank. The result? Our muscles tense, our skin loses that rosy glow, and wrinkles begin to form.

It causes hair loss. As stress causes the blood vessels begin to constrict, hair follicles are deprived of the oxygen, minerals, and vitamins it needs for healthy hair growth, says Bank. When you're feeling so frazzled, your body burns more energy and directs the vitamins and nutrients to those body parts that it needs for survival like the heart, lungs, and brain. So your scalp doesn't get the benefit of these essential nutrients (read: loss of hair).

"Over the years it has become easy to spot clients who are dealing with a lot of stress," says Damian Santiago, co-owner of Mizu New York Salon. Signs like hair loss, hair thinning, and an overall lack of shine and luster are common. In extreme cases, patients start to suffer from ailments such as Alopecia and Psoriasis, both of which contribute to weak and fragile hair that breaks easily.

It leads to bad beauty habits. Sometimes severe stress can lead to formation of nasty habits like hair twirling or twisting or nail biting, which become almost subconscious, says dermatologist Rebecca Kazin, M.D. All that twisting can result in chronic trauma to the hair in some areas, leading to broken hair and even hair loss.